‘Negotiating the list: launching Macmillan’s Colonial Library and author contracts’

Announced with considerable fanfare in the periodical and trade press, the Macmillan Colonial Library was formally launched on 1 March 1886; Charles Morgan, the firm’s first house historian, noted that the project was apparently launched at the personal instigation of Maurice Macmillan following his honeymoon tour of India, Australia and New Zealand in 1884-5. The list issued a relatively modest 34 titles in its first twelve months, with fiction comprising the overwhelming majority of titles; as Simon Eliot has observed, this represented a small, but significant proportion of the new titles (156) issued by Macmillan in 1886. The firm claimed that the venture was a bold experiment in publishing by providing quality books at low prices for the prime colonial markets, but it is equally evident that Macmillan was intent on capitalising on the weakness of the lending library system in the colonies, and the prospective expansion of both the domain and effectiveness of international copyright law. This expectation was partially satisfied by the passage and ratification of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, which was signed on 9 September 1886, and ratified on 5 September 1887. While the extension of a mutually enforceable international copyright law amongst the signatory nations (including Britain’s colonial possessions) was not a panacea against unauthorised publication, it did substantially decrease the potential loss of revenue from piracy for British authors and publishers. The launch of Macmillan’s Colonial Library list roughly coincides therefore with a new phase in

---

the production, distribution and legal protection of books in an increasingly international publishing market.

Macmillan’s enterprise was driven not just by changing legislation, but also by the demands of readers. As Graeme Johanson observes in his landmark study, Colonial Editions in Australia, 1843-1972, Macmillan sought to benefit from the extraordinary appetite of the colonial markets (especially Australia) for imported British books; sufficiently distant from the USA and with an embryonic home grown publishing industry, Australia, Johanson notes, ‘was the largest market for British book exports continuously from at least 1889 until 1953’. 4 India, New Zealand and South Africa were also book hungry markets with fast expanding reading publics, keen to be supplied with the latest fiction published in London; the situation in Canada was altogether different, with British publishers incapable of stemming the flood of cheap (often unauthorised) American publications. In attempting to meet the needs of these markets, Macmillan’s Colonial Library soon became one of the most successful ventures in the history of colonial fiction publishing; some 624 titles were issued by 1913 at the rate of about one title every fortnight, and some 1,739 titles were published under the imprint of the Colonial Library and its successors, a feat which was unsurpassed by any other publisher. 5 Macmillan’s rate of production of new titles closely matches the reading rate of avid purchasers and collectors of the Colonial Library, once again suggesting the very close relationship between the needs of readers and the production of the list. In 1913, the name of the Colonial Library edition was changed to the Empire Library, and in 1937, by which time the air was thick with talk of swaraj in India and self-rule in the rest of the dominions and colonies, it became the blandly titled Overseas Library. The venture finally came to an end in

---

5 Ibid., p.75.
1960, long outlasting the apogee of British imperial political power, and belatedly limning the reading tastes of several generations of subject readers.

Macmillan’s Colonial Library was overwhelmingly and unashamedly a fiction list, and in this sense, it was not particularly representative of Macmillan’s overall production profile, or indeed, the nature of its activities in a range of colonial markets; in India, for example, Macmillan was overwhelmingly a publisher of educational primers and textbooks, and its publishing identity, as Rimi B Chatterjee has noted, was already closely associated with school boards and their curricula.6 At this time the producer of high volume educational primers, such as Pyari Charan Sarkar’s _First Book of Reading for Native Children_ (1851-70), Macmillan’s imprimatur in the Indian market before the launch of the Colonial Library list was as an educational publisher; this was not the case in Australia, for example, where the Macmillan brand would become much more closely associated with quality contemporary fiction.

In her groundbreaking study of Indian circulating libraries and their readers, Priya Joshi notes that ‘of the 680 titles published between 1886-1916, 93 per cent (or 629 titles) were fiction, with history and travel trailing at roughly 1 percent to 3 percent respectively.’7 Not only was the Macmillan’s Colonial Library the most successful colonial publishing venture of its kind, but it was also the most overtly fiction heavy; in this respect, it is worth comparing Macmillan’s list with that other roughly contemporary British construction, Oxford University Press’s World’s Classics list.8 The historical, cultural and economic implications of a publisher’s ‘colonial list’ are now attracting academic interest. Priya Joshi

has shown the extent to which Indian readers were shaped by their selection, appropriation, assimilation or rejection of the largely fictional and overwhelmingly British works available to them. Contesting the notion of subaltern intellectual passivity (Leonard Woolf’s infamous observation that popular fiction was the ‘fodder on which the subalterns chew the cud in the cantonments of the Empire’), Joshi has demonstrated that Indian readers made discriminating choices in what they chose to read, and how, and that this had a directly registered impact on the firm’s policy:

The success of Macmillan’s fiction series lay largely with the firm’s willingness to satisfy the tastes of their Indian readers, a fact well documented in the firm’s private correspondence files and readers’ reports…not only is research into the colonial marketplace useful for gaining insights into the circulation of print and ideas between metropolis and periphery, but analysing the nature of what Macmillan sold discloses an understudied economic aspect of the production of the British novel. The willingness of British firms such as Macmillan to please this new and palpable colonial market might also, as I show, be reflected in the kinds of novels that were eventually published in Britain, thus highlighting the contribution of the colonial marketplace to the shape of the English novel.9

What has been less easily registered and interpreted is the extent to which authors themselves engaged with their publishers in the dynamics of the construction of the colonial list. I want to take Joshi’s argument a little further; in this case, from within the copious evidence offered by the Macmillan archive itself, and ask to what extent authors engaged in this process. Who did Macmillan choose for their colonial list, and why? Was being placed on the

colonial library list a sign of literary esteem, and therefore, another expression of what John Sutherland has called Frederick Macmillan’s ‘highmindedness’, and did Macmillan’s authors see it this way? Or was the colonial list simply a highly successful commercial venture, an exercise in cheap printing and distribution that disproportionately benefited the firm’s most overtly populist authors? Did British or American writers register either enthusiasm or reluctance in entering Macmillan’s remarkably successful venture in Colonial publishing? Did they willingly engage in this exercise in transnational print capitalism? Did they understand its contexts? Did negotiations over the Colonial Library effect transactions over their British and American editions? Were contractual terms bundled together and if so, what does this reveal about both the authors’ and the publishers’ understanding of the importance of colonial markets? And did Macmillan’s understanding of the cultural capital resident in the Colonial Library list, and implicitly, the taste of its potential readers, change with its evolving author profile?

I want to try and answer some of these questions by examining, albeit discursively, some examples of these negotiations over the contractual terms for inclusion in the colonial library list. I want to scrutinise the contractual negotiations on Macmillan’s Colonial Library list of five leading late nineteenth and early twentieth century novelists: two established (and establishment) British novelists, the Tasmanian born Mrs Humphry Ward (1851-1920) and the Dorset born Thomas Hardy (1840-1928); two popular and financially successful expatriate Americans, the Tuscan born Indophile F. Marion Crawford (1854-1909) and the New York born Francophile Edith Wharton (1862-1937); and one new and developing ex-colonial writer, the Australian born Prussian Countess, Elizabeth von Arnim (1866-1941). In examining these seemingly disparate individual negotiations over contractual terms, I want to bring a renewed attention to the importance of colonial editions to the business of writing and

---

publishing in the imperial centre, and suggest once again, the deeply implicated sets of relationships between London and its captive markets, between commercial success and literary esteem, and between intended readers and implicit assumptions about literary taste.

*Fashioning a colonial identity: Thomas Hardy*

In many senses, Thomas Hardy presents perhaps the most uncomplicated itinerary in Macmillan’s Colonial Library list. He was one of the first major novelists to be contacted by Macmillan about the new colonial edition even before the scheme had been formally launched; his first formal response to the publisher was both enthusiastic and proactive:

> I have asked Mr. Smith (of Smith & Elder) if he would have any objection to your publishing *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in the Colonial Library; & he says that he has none whatever; but he suggests that I should consider whether such an edition would effect the sale of a cheap English edition I might hereafter publish. Now that is a matter on which you are the best judge, so that if you think I need be under no fear on that score I agree at once – for personally I [very?] like the idea of this Colonial Library which you have been so enterprising as to start. You will perhaps know from experience of your own cheap editions if the new library has interfered with these at all.11

Smith, Elder’s concern, that cheap editions would find their way back to Britain and damage sales in the home market, was a predictable and largely fatuous one; remarkably few copies did indeed find their way back ‘home’. Smith, Elder’s concerns about developing the Indian

---

11 Thomas Hardy to Frederick Macmillan, 6 June 1886, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54923.
market in particular were coloured more by past experience (the firm had suffered
disastrously in its first venture in India during the events of 1857) than by current events. At
any rate, Frederick Macmillan responded immediately to Hardy’s interest in the venture,
offering him a contract for £25 to cover royalties for the Colonial edition of *The Mayor of
Casterbridge* (no. 32 in the Colonial Library) just two days later. Macmillan’s offer was
doubled to £50 for Hardy’s next book, *The Woodlanders*, (no. 49 in the Colonial Library) in
May 1887. Another £50 was offered for the Colonial Library edition of *Wessex Tales* in May
1888. In 1894, Macmillan offered Hardy a memorandum of terms for the Colonial Edition
which brought all his previous titles under their control, and also offered to standardise his
royalty payments:

The publishers have the right to print and publish in England subject to a royalty two
books viz. *The Woodlanders* and *Wessex Tales* written by the author and have the
exclusive right to print and publish in their colonial library editions of the following
novels of which he is the author: *Desperate Remedies*, *A Laodicean*, *A Pair of Blue
Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, *The Mayor of
Casterbridge*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Trumpet Major*, *Two on a Tower*, *A
Group of Noble Dames*, *Tess of the D’Urdervilles*, *Life’s Little Ironies*, *The
Woodlanders*, *Wessex Tales*…the publishers further agree on their part to pay to the
author a royalty of fourpence (4d) on each volume of the Colonial Library editions of
these books sold by them and the Author undertakes not to authorise the publication of
special Colonial editions by any other firm… it is agreed that should any of the books
Macmillan’s memorandum serves to underline several trends in Hardy’s standing with the firm. First, Macmillan wanted all of Hardy’s books, including those that were published earlier in England under the imprint of Sampson Low or Chatto and Windus, for example, to appear under the Macmillan Colonial Library edition imprint in the colonies (the memorandum included transfer rights for these books). Secondly, instead of Frederick Macmillan writing in each instance to Hardy to ask him whether his next novel would appear in the Colonial Library Edition, he offers a standard and bundled contract: 4d per volume for all Colonial Library titles, and payments included with the royalty agreements for the British and American markets (4d, about 11%, was the standard rate that Macmillan offered their authors for this series; the books retailed for the equivalent of 3s). In India and the Colonies at any rate, Hardy was to have a uniform identity in front of his reading public as far as his publishers’ imprimatur was concerned: he would be presented unambiguously as a Macmillan House Author, even though his British and American readers at this point, might not have considered him to be that.

And yet, Hardy’s existence on the Colonial Library list was not simply a case of Macmillan subsuming and deleting the textual and material identity of his earlier publishers, for as Michael Millgate has proven, Hardy’s colonial editions were effectively hybrids. Macmillan went to great pains to insure that the typesetting, font and format matched that of the Sampson Low and Chatto & Windus British editions, thereby ensuring a seamless familiarity for colonial readers (especially British emigrants to Australia) who already knew

---

12 Frederick Macmillan to Thomas Hardy, 21 May 1894, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54923.
Hardy’s work. Perhaps the most interesting clause in Macmillan’s memorandum of agreement was the last: that should any of his books run out of print for a space of six months, then the publisher would lose their rights in that work. This is perhaps the clearest expression of both Macmillan’s confidence in the success and longevity of their Colonial Library Edition, and an unequivocal expression of their confidence in Hardy’s ability to garner readers.

This confidence between author and publisher smoothed over potential difficulties. Writing to Frederick Macmillan in September 1895, and with the imminent publication of Jude the Obscure clearly on his mind, Hardy declared that

The only idea bearing on the subject that I have had about your Colonial edition is that any future novel of mine would probably be added to those enumerated in the list, subject to agreement at the time. Now, as there always would be the possibility of my writing a novel of such a character that you would not care to attach your imprimatur to it, or of some objection on my side, there could be no definite understanding between us on the matter beforehand. I also suppose that in the event of such agreement, a colonial volume of any new story would follow first publication here not sooner than was formerly such in the case of the cheap home edition when the first edition was in three volumes—i.e. – six months.  

Macmillan would prove to be far less censorious than Hardy had feared, and their institutional commitment to him was greater than he had anticipated. Despite Hardy’s very public withdrawal from novel writing following the negative reception of Jude the Obscure, in 1902 Macmillan offered him a memorandum formalising his royalty rate for all the different

---

14 Thomas Hardy to Frederick Macmillan, 12 September 1895, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54932.
editions of his work that they published: 25% on 6s editions; 20% on 4s and 5s editions; 16.5% on books priced below 4s; and 4d per copy (roughly 11%) for the Colonial Library edition. The 1902 memorandum’s fixing of all these royalty rates (Colonial and otherwise) suggests the interdependence of sales in different markets and for separate editions. Good sales in the Colonial Library edition were recognised through improved terms for British editions. Hardy’s terms were clearly at the higher end of contractual royalties that they paid their authors at the time (25% was a gold standard for the firm); what is also evident is that despite his public withdrawal from the field of novel writing, Macmillan was confident that his work would continue to sell in the British and the Colonial Markets for years to come. For Hardy, the Colonial Library opened up a new market of predominantly Australian readers while at the same time, it entrenched his position as one of Macmillan’s favoured authors.

A source of supplementary income: Mrs Humphry Ward

For the enterprising author, the existence of colonial editions and a Colonial Library list meant the possibility of better contractual terms with the publisher, and indeed, a supplementary revenue stream. Macmillan’s correspondence with Mrs Humphry Ward over the contractual arrangements for her books again suggests this transactional relationship between the terms offered for the Colonial Library edition, and that offered at home; however, in Mrs Humphry Ward’s case, this was a negative one. Ward was one of the first major commercially and critically successful new novelists placed on the Colonial Library list; Robert Elsmere (1888), Miss Bretherton (1884) and The History of David Grieve (1892) all featured on the Colonial Library’s list within its first decade (numbers 77, 84 and 135 on the list, respectively). Macmillan, the British publisher of her first novel Miss Bretherton had famously lost Mrs Humphry Ward to Smith, Elder and Co. over her next book, Robert Elsmere, an unexpected sales success that went on to become the bestselling book of the
decade.\(^\text{15}\) Despite having lost her, Macmillan were eager to be her publisher in the colonial markets, and Mrs. Humphry Ward was ready to accept – but not at any price. In May 1888, Macmillan paid her £75 for the rights to print the Colonial Library edition of *Robert Elsmere*, and in February 1889, they paid her £30 for the right to print *Miss Bretherton*. When it came to negotiations over her next novel, *The History of David Grieve*, Mrs Humphry Ward again displayed her famous ability to talk up her literary and financial worth. Writing to Frederick Macmillan in October 1891, she declared that she was ‘very much obliged for your letter and for your proposal concerning the Colonial and Indian copyright of *The History of David Grieve*. I am quite willing to accept 4d on each copy sold, and £200 on account of the royalty’.\(^\text{16}\)

Mrs Humphry Ward was clearly aware of Macmillan’s standard contract for the Colonial Edition (4d for copy sold), but what is interesting here is her confidence in her ability to sell very large numbers; her demanded advance represents the royalty on a sale of 12,000 copies. At this point, of all the Macmillan authors, only Marion Crawford was achieving sales of over 10,000 copies in the Colonial Library edition. Clearly troubled by the prospect of losing her again, especially as Macmillan had already paid an enormous £7,000 advance for the American rights to the book, the firm agreed to Ward’s exacting terms. She pushed her publisher even further with the terms for the Colonial Library edition of her next novel, *Marcella* (1894). ‘We have not yet made any arrangement for the colonial copyright’ she imperiously informed Macmillan, adding ‘I shall be content with 4d a copy royalty, and £250 in advance of royalty, if that will suit you.’\(^\text{17}\) Macmillan succumbed, noting in their contract that ‘Two hundred & fifty pounds on account of a royalty of fourpence (4d) agreed to

---


\(^\text{16}\) Mrs Humphry Ward to Frederick Macmillan, 13 October 1891, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54928, f.97.

\(^\text{17}\) Mrs Humphry Ward to Frederick Macmillan, 6 October 1893, British Library Macmillan Archive Add MS 54928, f.116.
be paid on every copy sold of “Marcella” printed in a special form for circulation only in India and the British Colonies (“The Colonial Library Edition”). Unfortunately for the publisher, Ward’s novel *Marcella* did not sell in the volume she had anticipated; once again in their dealings with Mrs Humphry Ward, Macmillan was out of pocket.

As far as Mrs Humphry Ward was concerned, Macmillan’s Colonial Library venture was another source for bolstering her already considerable literary income. As early May 1892, she wrote to Frederick Macmillan requesting that the agreed royalty on the Colonial Library of *The History of David Grieve* be paid in advance. ‘In our agreement’ she wrote, ‘I notice that £200 was to be paid in advance of royalty…would it be inconvenient to you to let me have that sum now?’ Just five months later, and frantically juggling both her increased earnings and her even greater expenses, she wrote again to her publisher, asking for a further royalty payment based on expected sales: ‘would it be inconvenient to you to let me anticipate a little & to send me my share of the proceeds of the Colonial sale up to Michaelmass?’ If Hardy’s negotiations over the Colonial Library editions of his books demonstrate the gradual and consolidating recognition of an author within a publisher’s list, Mrs Humphry Ward’s astute dealings with Macmillan suggest something altogether more mercantile, perhaps even mercenary: the opening up of new colonial markets meant the possibility of exacting greater remuneration for her work from her publisher. And yet, while she was acutely aware of the financial benefits of the Colonial Library editions, it is fairly evident from her correspondence that Mrs Humphry Ward did not see Colonial (and specifically Indian) readers as readers at all. To her surprise Macmillan had included her English translation of the Swiss Huguenot philosopher Henri-Frédéric Amiel’s *Fragments d’un Journal Intime* (1882-4), translated as

---

19 Mrs Humphry Ward to Frederick Macmillan, 11 May 1892, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54928, f.106.
20 Mrs Humphry Ward to Frederick Macmillan, 19 October 1892, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54938, f.111.
Amiel’s Journal, the journal intime of Henri-Frédéric Amiel (1885) on the Colonial Library list (number 87), and she received with even greater astonishment the news that Macmillan wanted to have Amiel’s Journal translated and published in Bengali. ‘Of course I shall be very glad that Amiel should be translated into Bengalee’, she wrote to Frederick Macmillan in March 1892, but she added, ‘what a strange proposal! The Indian mind is wonderful!’ 21 Ward did in fact have many willing readers of the Bengali translation of her rendition of Amiel’s journal; the translation sold well, and its reading was even represented in contemporary Bengali fiction. Nikhil in Rabindranath Tagore’s The Home and World (1915) notably reads this Macmillan sponsored Bengali translation of Amiel’s Journal; Tagore had himself read Mrs Humphry Ward’s English translation in the Colonial Library edition in 1894.22 The reception of Amiel’s twice translated text is evidence of Macmillan’s far greater and more realistic awareness of the reading potential (and not just the possible financial gain) to be had from Indian readers and Colonial editions – in stark contrast to Mrs Humphry Ward’s purely commercial interest in increasing advance payments or royalties. Two expatriate and very different American novelists – F. Marion Crawford and Edith Wharton – provide another perspective in their negotiations with Macmillan over the Colonial Library. One had an insider’s knowledge of the possibilities offered by the Colonial Library; the other, while relatively unaware of the venture, was clearly rewarded by Macmillan through their contractual terms for her loyalty to the firm.

The colonial insider: F. Marion Crawford

Though scarcely read today, F. Marion Crawford was the first commercial success of Macmillan’s Colonial Library Edition, and the first author to sell in excess of 10,000 copies;

21 Mrs Humphry Ward to Frederick Macmillan, March 1892, British Library Macmillan Archive, BL Add MS 54927, f.104.
in this, he replicated in no small measure, the remarkable sales figures he was already achieving in the British and American markets. Unsurprisingly, Macmillan had anticipated his potential sales in colonial markets, and he was one of the first novelists, on 4 January 1886, to be formally approached by the publisher about their new venture. An amateur Sanskrit scholar, and for two years the editor of the *Indian Herald* in Allahabad, Crawford replied informatively and enthusiastically on 8 January 1886:

I think you will allow that, if the publications prove remunerative, it will be fair to pay a certain percentage on the copies sold. I do not mean in the first instance, but later, when the plan is working well. Therefore I think that this first arrangement ought not to be regarded as a precedent from which there is to be deviation. From personal knowledge I am aware that a very large sale might be anticipated in India from a good book published at one rupee, and if you can publish at 12 annas (about 1s 6d) a volume like an English shilling edition, you would catch the whole Eurasian (half-caste) population, who read greedily. I once printed and published a small amount in the office of my newspaper at Allahabad, containing a few Christian stories. I sold it at 8 annas, about 1 shilling, and I disposed of 500 copies in Allahabad alone in about a fortnight. The cry in India is for cheap books, especially among the Eurasians.

As regards the “Lonely Parish”, I am quite willing to give you the publication of it in the colonies for £40, the price Tauchnitz have paid for each of my last two books. You will soon know whether the sales are really important, and whether you can afford, for another book, to pay a percentage.\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{23}\) F. Marion Crawford to Frederick Macmillan, 8 January 1886: British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54935, f.58.
Crawford’s reply glosses his own knowledge of writing and publishing for money in the Indian marketplace. What is interesting here is that Macmillan’s price point of entry into the Indian market was higher than that expected by Crawford (the 8-12 anna market), and despite this, the sales volume achieved was higher than Crawford’s relatively modest ‘500 copies in a fortnight’ (this is incidentally, exactly the scale of production that typified much Indian mofussil printing presses at the time and today).\(^{24}\) In terms of price, Crawford’s vision of the Colonial Library sits above the cheap (and largely disposable) printing of mainly India presses, but below for example, A.H. Wheeler’s recently established Indian Railway Library series (this was Kipling’s stalwart and sold relatively short paperback books for 1 Rupee). Macmillan’s Colonial Library however, befitting a publishing firm that as Simon Eliot has observed, bucked the 19\(^{th}\) century trend for ever cheaper editions by relentlessly adding value to its catalogue, knew that it could pitch this series very successfully at a higher price.\(^{25}\) Clearly there was more value (and more profit) to be extracted from the Indian market than Crawford had anticipated, and Macmillan was aware of this.

Crawford was in fact a very willing addition to Macmillan’s Colonial Library List. In March 1887 he was offered (and accepted) £50 for the rights to his new novel, *Saracinesca* (1887); in May 1887 Macmillan offered to pay £50 for each of five previously published novels to be included in the Colonial Library Edition (once again, Crawford accepted without hesitation).\(^{26}\) He soon became the stalwart of the list, especially in India, and Macmillan recognised this with improved contractual terms. In May 1893, for example, they offered him

\(^{24}\) For an evaluation of small scale provincial printing and its impact on Kipling’s early career, see Shafquat Towheed, ‘Two paradigms of literary production: the production, circulation and legal status of Rudyard Kipling’s *Departmental Ditties* and Indian Railway Library texts’ in Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond (eds), *Books without Borders, Volume 2: Perspectives from South Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp.125-36.


\(^{26}\) Macmillan’s contractual terms for Crawford can be found in the author correspondence file, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54935-6.
£100 for the rights to *Marion Darche* (1893). Increasingly, Macmillan’s contracts for Crawford were bundled; the Colonial Library Edition rights were included in the contract for British and American publication. One of the chief reasons for Crawford’s burgeoning earning power in this period is the success of his books on the Colonial Library Edition list; as a publisher, Macmillan was certainly not averse to rewarding their authors for success in colonial markets.

*The esteemed house author: Edith Wharton*

Sometimes, as in the case of Edith Wharton, the contracts for the Colonial Library Edition became an avenue for the publisher to compensate the author for relatively disappointing sales in the British market. Macmillan was for almost the first twenty years of Wharton’s literary career her only publisher in the British and Colonial markets, but not in her home market, America.27 As an esteemed (even perhaps, a coterie) house writer, she was offered generous terms for the inclusion of her books in the Colonial Library Edition, despite that fact that sales of her books in the British market were a fraction of their American figures. As early as March 1903, and without any prompting from the author, Macmillan offered Wharton the top royalty rate for the Colonial Library edition of her next novel, *The House of Mirth*:

> In addition to the ordinary six shilling edition we generally publish all our new novels in our so-called Colonial Library, - a series which is issued in a cheap form for circulation only in India and the British Colonies. We publish all Mr. Crawford’s novels in this series and in fact nearly everything that we bring out. On such an edition the highest royalty is sixpence (6d) a copy and we shall be glad to include your book

---

in this series on that basis. I have therefore included the Colonial Edition in the accompanying form of agreement and hope that you will allow it to stand.28

Wharton accepted Macmillan’s offer of a 6d royalty rate for *The House of Mirth* in 1905 without hesitation. She was again offered the top 6d royalty rate for the colonial library editions of *Men, Women and Ghosts* in June 1910, for *Ethan Frome* in January 1911, for *The Reef* in 1912, for *Summer* in March 1917 and for *The Marne* in September 1918. Despite the fact that Marion Crawford outsold her by a factor of more than ten to one in the Colonial Library Edition, Edith Wharton was consistently offered a higher rate of royalty (6d per copy rather than 4d) than her bestselling compatriot. Even after she left Macmillan’s books in Britain in the aftermath of the First World War, and switched publishers in America (from Scribner’s to Appleton), Wharton insisted on keeping the colonial contracts for her novels with Macmillan. Wharton’s high rate of royalty contracts within the Colonial Library list visibly demonstrates her high esteem within the firm; but it also demonstrates Macmillan’s willingness to include their best authors in this venture in colonial publishing. Unlike Leonard Woolf, Frederick Macmillan clearly did not think of readers in colonial markets as passive, indiscriminate and ill-informed consumers, nor was he constructing a literary list dictated only by sales success.

*The colonial outsider: Elizabeth von Arnim*

It is important to note that while Macmillan remained proactive about placing their authors on the new colonial library list, some writers (both new and established) remained sceptical and resistant about being included. The Australian born, English raised, Prussian novelist, the Countess Elizabeth von Arnim (surely a paragon of the déraciné colonial metropolitan), was

28 Frederick Macmillan to Edith Wharton, 6 March 1903, British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 55472(2), f.784.
openly confused and resistant to the idea of being placed on the colonial library list. Writing to her in February 1901, Frederick Macmillan offered to place her next work, a still untitled third novel, on the Colonial Library list as part of the contract for the book. ‘We should like also to include the book in our Colonial Library which circulates only in India and the other British Colonies’, Frederick Macmillan informed her; ‘on all copies sold in this form, which is considerably cheaper, we would pay a royalty of fourpence per copy, which is the same that we pay to Mrs. Humphry Ward, Marion Crawford and other popular writers.’ Replying over the contractual terms for the novel, now called *The Benefactress*, von Arnim obstinately refuted Macmillan’s offer: ‘the proposal to include the book in your Colonial Library, paying me a royalty of 4d a copy, I could not agree to anything like so small a royalty’, she declared, adding, ‘as far as I understand, the including of the book in that series would be directly contrary to my interests.’

It is worth pointing out here that while 4d per copy was a standard offer for inclusion on the Colonial Library list, it was not the best possible contractual term that Macmillan provided; Edith Wharton and Dorothy Vernon, for example, both received 6d in contracts negotiated at roughly the same time. Dismayed by von Arnim’s resistance to a colonial edition (this is all the more regrettable considering her burgeoning sales at the time), Frederick Macmillan felt obliged to explain to her the importance of the colonial library to her sales in a number of markets:

> We have no desire to press the question of the Colonial Edition, but we feel it right to point out that if you have been advised that such an edition interferes with the sale of

---

29 Frederick Macmillan to Elizabeth von Arnim, 11 February 1901: British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 55465 (1), f.145.
30 Elizabeth von Arnim to Frederick Macmillan, 16 February 1901: British Library Macmillan Archive, Add MS 54949, f.54.
the ordinary English edition your advisers can have no real knowledge of the facts. You will see from the enclosed list that all the leading novelists, without exception, from whom we have the honour to publish, have their books included in this Colonial Library, and the same is true of other publishers for since we led the way with our Colonial Library some fifteen years ago every publisher and author has followed suit. The fact is that the ordinary English edition does not find its way into the backwoods of Australia or the scattered English populations of India or South Africa, so that if no Colonial edition is produced it merely means that the author misses an important public. The books are sold on the strict understanding that they are not to circulate except in the Colonies, and in our long experience we have never known a single case in which the Colonial editions have interfered with the English. Not long ago, the objection you urge was made to us by another popular author, Mr Lane Allen, author of “The Choir Invisible” and other books which have an extremely large circulation both here and in America, but we succeeded in convincing him that in declining to take advantage of our Colonial Library he was deliberately cutting off a source both of revenue and influence.31

Despite Macmillan’s reassurances, von Arnim the ex-colonial, did not take up her publisher’s offer. To the best of my knowledge, none of her books appeared in Macmillan’s Colonial Library Edition. Her refusal to countenance Macmillan’s offer demonstrates both her inexperience in dealing with publishers and negotiating contracts, and her lack of awareness of the function of the Colonial Library Edition. This was in the eyes of the publisher, not just a venture driven by profit, but one that bolstered their literary esteem as well. Macmillan

31 Frederick Macmillan to Elizabeth von Arnim, 19 February 1901, British Library Macmillan Archive, MS 55465 (1), f.322-324.
sought to place their best authors on this new list; the contractual terms for the inclusion of titles in the Colonial Library Edition that I have examined display a remarkably deft accommodation of popular tastes and the dictates of the marketplace with the firm’s characteristic high-mindedness, and its determination to shape and exploit new readers in emerging markets.

**Conclusion**

As Macmillan’s Colonial Library developed through the inexorable issue of new works of fiction in its first decade, roughly at the rate of one every fortnight, the implicit relationship between publication strategy, literary taste and implied readership became more evident. From the very beginning, the Colonial Library had been designed as a high quality, low cost, and relatively up to date fiction list, one designed to furnish British emigrants with the kernel of both high culture and contemporary cosmopolitan taste. Macmillan’s desire to place their best authors, and not merely their *bestselling* authors, on the Colonial Library list, is evident from the contractual negotiations that I have examined. In case we are in any doubt about Macmillan’s commitment to the cultivation of literary taste amongst their readers, Number 23 on the list, Frederic Harrison’s *The Choice of Books* (1886), reminds us volubly of the critical debate taking place at the time about the canonisation of literature. The firm’s desire to support the establishment of private libraries in the colonies was instantly recognised, as the editorial in *The Australasian* for June 1886 observed: ‘Macmillan are evidently of opinion that numbers of persons in these colonies would be disposed to form permanent libraries of their own if the best works of standard authors of the present day could be purchased for something less than a French novel, with this advantage over the latter, that the English book is neatly bound, and printed in a good clear type on paper that is agreeable to the touch.’

---

Perhaps the most telling evidence of how Macmillan’s Colonial Library developed to both structure and respond to changing literary tastes comes from the paratextual material to be found in so many of the volumes – the Colonial Library list itself. There are two main ways in which the Colonial Library list is catalogued. The first, the simple numerical list, such as that appended to Rolf Boldrewood’s *A Sydney-Side Saxon* (London: Macmillan, 1891), Colonial Library Edition number 124, has titles ordered by their date of issue; this is unsurprisingly most prevalent during the initial years of the project, the period of its consolidation (see Appendix 1). The numerical list provides a linear itinerary driving the private collector and reader; the order of books is shaped by the publisher, and the onus is on the buyer/reader to conform and keep up. As the Colonial Library list became more extensive, a different culture of literary consumption became enshrined: that of discerned discrimination. As the Colonial Library approached its first decade, and with over 250 titles already issued, the catalogues bound into new editions, such as that in Rudyard Kipling’s *The Light that Failed* (London: Macmillan, 1895), Colonial Library number 249, changed from numerical to alphabetical lists, often with the addition of précis material and clips from reviews (see Appendix 2). Readers’ purchasing could now be author driven, rather than list driven; the anxiety over contemporaneousness evident in the numerical list is displaced by a concern about the literary value of the author, reprising the rationale for the construction of a quality personal library in Harrison’s *The Choice of Books*. Authors negotiated their way on to Macmillan’s Colonial Library list, thereby denoting their standing (both critical and commercial) within the firm; but just as evidently, readers too had to negotiate the complex structure of a burgeoning, consolidated, increasingly sophisticated list, one that had progressively transformed itself from a numbered list of itemised books to buy, to a browseable, descriptive list of works of literature to collect: in other words, the essential apparatus for a discriminating, bourgeois culture of reading. As *The Calcutta Englishman*
reminds us, ‘Messrs Macmillan and Co. have made it possible, not merely to every scattered
group of Europeans, but for every individual throughout the Empire, to acquire for a nominal
outlay the nucleus of a really valuable library.’

Works Cited

L. Bently, ‘Copyright, translations, and relations between Britain and India in the nineteenth

Journal of the Copyright Society of the USA 48 (2001), 311-340

R. B. Chatterjee, ‘Macmillan in India: a short account of the company’s trade with the sub-
continent’, in E. James (ed), Macmillan: A Publishing Tradition, Basingstoke: Palgrave,

K. Dutta and A. Robinson (eds), Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore, Cambridge:

S. Eliot, “‘To You in Your Vast Business”: some features of the quantitative history of
Macmillan, 1843-91’ in E. James (ed), Macmillan: A Publishing Tradition, Basingstoke:

M. Hammond, Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-

33 See Appendix, 2.


Appendix


   1. BARKER, *Station Life in New Zealand*. By Lady BARKER.
   2. Barker, *A Year’s House-keeping in South Africa*. By Lady BARKER.
   6. Crawford, *Dr Claudius: A True Story*. By F. MARION CRAWFORD.
   9. Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*. By RALPH WALDO EMERSON.
   14. James, *Tales of Three Cities*. By HENRY JAMES.
   15. Mitford, *Tales of Old Japan*. By A.B. MITFORD.


22. Yonge, *Chantry House*. By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.


24. THE AUTHOR OF “JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.” – *Miss Tommy: a Medieval Romance*. By the author of “JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN”.


26. Conway. *Living or Dead*. By HUGH CONWAY.

27. Oliphant. *Effie Ogilvie*. By MRS. OLIPHANT.

28. Harrison. *A Northern Lily*. By JOANNA HARRISON.


30. Lawless. *Hurrish: A Study*. By the Hon. EMILY LAWLESS.


32. Hardy. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. By THOMAS HARDY.


34. Madoc. *Margaret Jermine*. By FAYR MADOC.

35. Yonge. *A Modern Telemachus*. By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

36. Shorthouse. *Sir Percival*. By J.HENRY SHORTHOUSE.

37. Oliphant. *A House Divided Against Itself*. By MRS. OLIPHANT.

38. THE AUTHOR OF “JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.” – *About Money, and Other Things*. By the author of “JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN”.


40. Arnold. *Essays in Criticism*. By MATTHEW ARNOLD.

41. Hughes. *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*. BY AN OLD BOY.
42. Yonge. *The Dove in the Eagle’s Nest*. By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

43. Oliphant. *A Beleaguered City*. By MRS. OLIPHANT.

44. Morley. *Critical Miscellanies*. By JOHN MORLEY.

45. Bret Harte. *A Millionaire of Rough-and-Ready*, etc. By BRET HARTE.

46. Crawford. *Saracinesca*. By F. MARION CRAWFORD.

47. Veley. *A Garden of Memories; and other Stories*. By MARGARET VELEY.


49. Hardy. *The Woodlanders*. By THOMAS HARDY.

50. Dillwyn. *Jill*. By E.A. DILLWYN.
2. Catalogue bound into the Macmillan Colonial Library edition of Rudyard Kipling’s *The Light that Failed* (London: Macmillan, 1895), Colonial Library number 249, with the alphabetical, rather than numerical presentation of authors.